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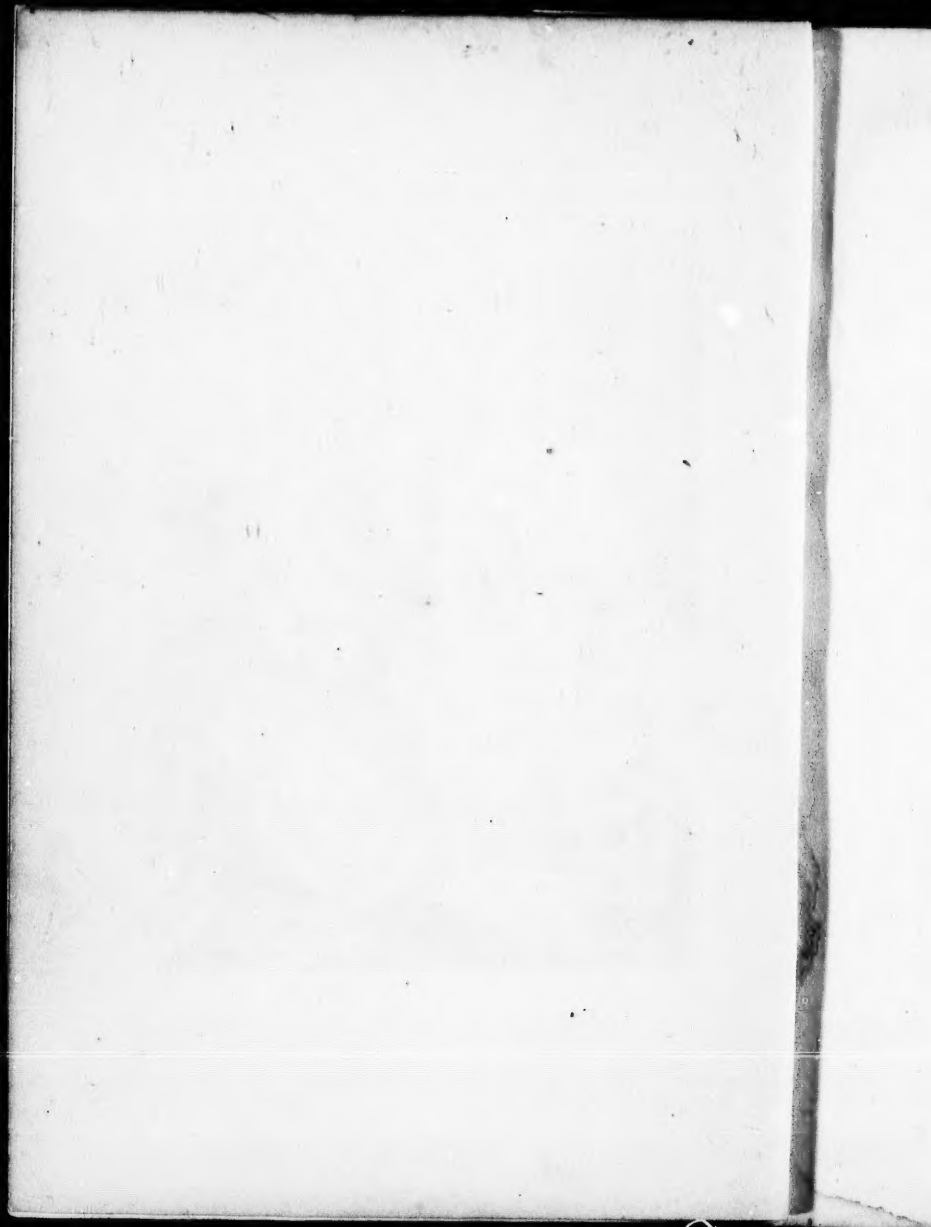
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LITTLE PANSY.



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LITTLE PANSY.

LITTLE PANSY:

THE

MINISTER'S ORPHAN DAUGHTER.



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LITTLE PANSY.

CHAPTER I.

 VERY well remember the day of 'Little Pansy's' arrival at school, although so many years have passed away since then, and have brought about so many changes—Oh, so many!

She always went by the name of 'Little Pansy'—I scarcely know why, except, perhaps, that she was modest and retiring. I know that it was Elizabeth Johnson who first gave this name to Anna Bennet; and Anna retained it as long as she remained at Mrs Austin's school,—a great deal longer indeed, for even now she has not quite lost it. I shall, therefore, take the liberty of using that name

sometimes, instead of the real one, while telling this story.

I was saying that I very well remember the day of Little Pansy's arrival at school. It was a half-holiday; and the scholars, of whom there were about twenty, were employing or amusing themselves in a variety of ways. For instance, two or three were writing letters for home; while at another part of the large schoolroom, four or five girls were gathered around one of their companions, who had a new and interesting story-book, which she was reading aloud. I was one of the listeners; and it is because the story I then heard made a great impression on my mind that I recollect that afternoon so well.

We had got to a rather exciting part of the book, when the schoolroom door opened, and Mrs Austin came in, leading by the hand a young stranger, and walked up to us.

'Young ladies,' she said, 'I have the pleasure of introducing a new companion; her name is

Anna Bennet. You will be kind to her, I am sure; and I trust she will soon be at home in your society.' And then our governess more particularly introduced the little girl to each of us, mentioning our names to her as she did so, and expecting us to shake hands with her, which of course we did.

I remember noticing when it came to my turn, that the little stranger's hand was cold, and that it trembled; also, that a tear or two hung upon her dark eyelashes, though her cheeks were not wet. Poor child! it was her first time of leaving home; and I knew, by my own experience, how great a trial it was to her; I had passed through it only a year before.

I am ashamed to say, however,—at least, I am ashamed of myself when I say it,—that my sympathy with our new schoolfellow was not very strong or lasting, and that I observed something besides the trembling hand and un-fallen tears which produced an unfavourable impression on my mind.

‘What a plain little thing!’ whispered Mary Tucker to me presently, when the short bustle was over.

‘I do not know whether or not she is plain, and I do not care either,’ I replied; ‘but I intend not to have much to do with her or to say to her.’

‘Dear me! why?’ Mary asked.

‘Do you not see what common mean stuff her dress is made of?’ I rejoined, glancing across the room at the young stranger, who had been kindly taken in hand by Elizabeth Johnson.

‘No,’ said Mary; ‘and if her dress *is* made of common stuff, is that any reason why you should dislike *her*?’

‘It is as good a reason as your disliking her because of her being plain,’ I answered, rather triumphantly.

‘You silly child! I did not say that I disliked the little chit for being plain; all I said was, that she is plain.’

‘And I did not say I disliked her because of her dress; I only—’

‘You only said that you would not have much to say to her because of it, and I want to know why,’ said Mary, who was my favourite companion at that time, which, however, did not prevent our sometimes having disputes about trifles.

‘Because I am sure her friends must be either poor or mean, to send her to school in such clothes as that.’

Mary laughed at me, and again called me silly. She told me that she thought I had formed a very hasty opinion, without any very good grounds. ‘I dare say Miss Bennet has more than one dress,’ she said; ‘and it does not much matter to us if she travelled to school in a common one, does it?’

‘But there is something else, Mary. Her dress is old as well as common; and it is faded, as if it had been worn a long time. It is made of old-fashioned stuff too, for I remember

having a dress just like it three years ago; and—'

Mary laughed again when I had got as far as this. 'What a knowing little puss you are about such things!' she said; and I was rather gratified, for I thought it was to my credit to be knowing.

'And old-fashioned and shabby as it is,' I continued, 'it has really been *turned*; I could tell that in a minute by the old gathers, and by the stuff being made up the wrong side outward.' I am afraid I tossed my head a little when I said this, and that I felt still more gratified when Mary Tucker said, 'How funny it is that you should find that out so soon, Kate! I did not notice anything about the girl's dress; I was looking more at her plain little face, I suppose.'

'Oh,' said I, 'I can see such things at a glance. And I always give a guess at what a girl is good for by the sort of clothes she wears!'

'Then I must mind what sort of dresses I

put on,' rejoined my companion, speaking in a light kind of way. 'There is one thing, though; you never saw me in a turned dress, Kate.'

'I should think not, indeed! And when people come to that, it shows that they are mean and shabby, or else poor.' Ah, me! I little thought then how I should be obliged, in after days, to turn my old dresses, and plan and contrive in many other ways how to make them last a very, very long time.

I shall not repeat any more of this conversation, for, as far as I remember it, it is not worth repeating. I am sorry to say, however, that I succeeded for a short time in prejudicing Mary Tucker against the new scholar. Mary was a good-natured girl, but she was thoughtless, and easily persuaded into the opinions of others. It did not occur to her to ask me why a child might not be lovely, and amiable, and well-behaved, and a pleasant companion, even though she might be poor. Much less did it come into Mary's mind at that time to attempt to show

me the meanness and sinfulness of my words, and thoughts, and actions, and how offensive my foolish, paltry pride—the pride of dress—must be in the sight of God. Neither Mary nor I thought of this; but, indeed, we were both of us ignorant of much that is more—Oh, how much more!—necessary to be known, than all the ‘accomplishments’ put together that were ever taught at all the boarding-schools in the world.

I shall not say anything to excuse the ignorance, and folly, and childish vanity of my thoughts; but I may partly account for them. I was an only child; my father was rich, or was supposed to be so; and I had always been indulged in a fondness for display, and praised by foolish servants for my good taste in dress. Indeed, when living at home, I had heard so much about dress, and seen so much care, and anxiety, and attention bestowed upon it, and had been so impressed with the idea that those who could not afford, or did not choose to have

and to wear rich and expensive clothing, were scarcely worth notice, that I do not wonder, even now, at my having fallen into the same way of thinking.

I am sorry to say, also, that the teaching I received at school up to that time had done little to correct my false notions. Mrs Austin's 'establishment,' as the school was called, was 'quite select,' to use her own expression. This meant that her pupils were supposed to be gentlemen's daughters, or, at any rate, the daughters of parents who could afford to pay a large price for education; and one result of this was, that much importance was attached to dress. The girls were expected, as we were sometimes told, when we were untidy or slovenly, to appear like ladies, and not like common people! This was not good teaching. It was right that untidy and slovenly habits should be corrected, but it was not right to feed our childish pride, by making us think that we were superior to other children, just because our parents were

in a station in life which enabled them to provide us with expensive teaching and fashionable clothing. Perhaps, if I had received better instructions, I should not so readily have despised Little Pansy because she made her first appearance in our schoolroom in a dress that had been turned.



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CHAPTER II.



T was quite true that Little Pansy's friends were poor. This was soon understood; and it was understood, also, that she could not have come to the school at all if our governess had not offered to receive her on very low terms, because she was the orphan daughter of a minister. Perhaps it would have been more considerate in that lady if she had kept back this knowledge from her pupils; but I suppose she did not think of this. At any rate, it was generous in her to take charge of the child without profit to herself; and it may be she thought that, if her richer pupils were made aware of this, the knowledge would induce them to treat their new companion with the greater sympathy and kindness.

In some measure, indeed, this was the case;

but I fear that Anna's mind was sometimes hurt by the condescension with which she was often treated, even when her schoolfellows meant to be kind. And I am sorry to say that there were occasions when she had to bear our rudeness, in putting her in mind of what we considered her inferior position and her poverty. But I shall not write about this just now; and I shall only say that, in spite of her poor dress, that had certainly been turned, and her limited wardrobe, Little Pansy, as Anna soon came to be called, gained the affections of the greater part of her schoolfellows by her gentleness to all.

I soon saw this, and it made me angry. I was more especially jealous when I found that Mary Tucker sometimes neglected my friendship, as I called my girlish fancy, and took notice of Little Pansy.

'You are behaving badly to me, Mary,' I said to her one day when we were walking out. It was a month or more after Little Pansy's arrival.

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'Kate, what do you mean?' said she, turning toward me with great surprise.

'Oh, you know very well what I mean. It is very plain that you do not care anything about me.'

'Not care anything about you!' echoed Mary, with wonder in her tone as well as in her looks.

'You know very well that you do not,' I continued sorrowfully, for I really did feel aggrieved; 'you know that you have got a new favourite now, and so you turn off old friends.'

'You must tell me more plainly what you mean, for I am sure I do not understand you, Kate,' rejoined Mary, rather coldly I thought.

'I should think your conscience would tell you that you have made friends with that insignificant child Miss Johnson makes such a fuss about.'

'Do you mean Little Pansy, Kate?'

'I mean Anna Bennet. You may call her Little Pansy if you please,' I replied, scornfully.

'You silly thing, how can you be so foolishly jealous?' said Mary, good-temperedly. 'I have not made particular friends with Little Pansy; and I am sure I do not wish to cast you off for her. But there is no reason why I should not talk to her sometimes, is there?'

'You have no business to be talking to her about me,' said I, proudly; 'and you know you have done that, Mary.'

'I did not say any harm about you,' said my companion, colouring; 'and I do not know how you can have found out that we were talking about you at all.'

'Ah, I do know, you see; and I think it was very treacherous of you.'

'I have not been treacherous at all; and when you say such a thing, you ought to be able to prove it,' said Mary, warmly.

'Did you not tell her what I said when she first came, about her old turned dress?' I asked. This was only a guess of mine; for though told that I had been spoken of, I did not know any more.

'No, I did not,' was Mary's reply; and then she explained that she had really been praising me, and telling our new schoolfellow that she would like me very much when she came to know me better.

'And what made you say that, Mary?' I wished to know.

'Little Pansy had been wondering what made you so cold and distant toward her,' said she.

'And so I will be,' I said, passionately; 'and I do not think it any proof of your friendship to me that you are making friends with a girl I do not like.'

'May I not speak to any other pupil without your leave, Kate?'

'You may speak to whom you please,' I answered, with pretended unconcern; 'but I shall know what value to set on your friendship if you go away from me to take up with girls whom you know very well I despise.'

Mary did not reply to this, and for a little while we walked on silently. I remember,

however, that I drew away my arm from hers at that part of our conversation, and that she did not take it up again while the walk lasted. And I may say here, that it would have been no more than I might have expected, had Mary told me plainly that my continued friendship on such unreasonable conditions as my words implied could not be worth having. She did not say this, however; for I believe she was really attached to me, and sorry that anything should happen to disturb our harmony. She was also, as I have already said, good-tempered, and not so easily offended as I. When she spoke again, therefore, it was to say, mildly and quietly,

‘I cannot think, Kate, why you dislike poor Little Pansy at all. She is a good little girl, I think—as good as any of the rest of us, at any rate; and I am sure there is nothing in her manners that she, or any one else, need be ashamed of.’

‘I do not say there is, do I, Mary?’

'And if her mother is not rich, she cannot help that; she would be if she could, I dare say. And, any way, there is no fault in Little Pansy because of it.'

'I do not accuse her of it, do I?' said I, stubbornly.

'It is almost like it, Kate,' continued Mary, who, now she had begun to speak in Anna's favour, seemed inspired with a more than usual amount of decision, which, however, did not last long. 'Yes,' she repeated, 'it is very much like it, when you seem as though you could not be bitter enough to please yourself against the poor child, and for no reason that I can see, only that she *is* poor.'

'And I say,' I replied very warmly, 'that it is a disgrace to our school, and very insulting to us who have so much money paid for our education, for Mrs Austin to take in paupers to board and teach for nothing. This is not a charity school, is it?'

'Kate, Oh! Kate,' exclaimed Mary, quite

shocked, as indeed she well might be, at such an outbreak of purse-pride.

‘You may say “Kate, Oh! Kate,” twenty times if you like, Mary,’ I went on; ‘but you know very well that Anna Bennet is a pauper, and is put to school by somebody’s charity, and that her mother is gone out as a housekeeper—just a mere servant. You cannot deny it, Mary; and if you choose to make a friend of such a girl, you are very welcome to do so, but I must beg to be excused.’

I may here say that our governess had not mentioned all these circumstances about Little Pansy; it was the dear child herself who had, with great simplicity, spoken of these matters, as well as of some others,—such, for instance, as her having a brother older than herself, who was a sailor, having gone to sea a year before. She had told of her father’s death too, which had taken place when she was a very little child; but she remembered him, and remembered also the sad desolation which had fol-

lowed, and the removal of her mother from a pretty parsonage in the country to a small dwelling in a town, where she lived on a very straitened income, which was not much improved, I am afraid, by a small school which she taught. At length, as Little Pansy reported, some friends kindly obtained for her brother a berth in a merchant-ship, and promised to help to pay for her being sent to school, so that her mother was at liberty to take a housekeeper's situation which had been offered her. All this was known; and it was understood that Little Pansy was to remain at Mrs Austin's school until she was fitted to become a teacher herself. These matters had been quietly talked of; and of course I had heard them, although I had spoken but very few words to Anna.

I shall not relate what further passed between Mary Tucker and myself on this occasion; I need only say that it ended in almost a quarrel, which was healed over, however, by Mary's

earnest professions that she cared a great deal more for me and my friendship than she did for Anna Bennet and hers. This soothed me a little; and it soothed me still more to see afterward that Mary once more copied my coolness toward our unoffending new schoolfellow.

I am sure our governess was not intentionally unkind to Little Pansy; but I cannot help thinking that she did not, in every respect, and in these early days, act very wisely. For instance, Anna was not quick in learning, and for her age (which was over twelve years when she first came among us) she was backward in some branches of education. This, doubtless, was trying to the patience of a teacher, and sometimes Mrs Austin was provoked to reproach her dull pupil for these deficiencies, and to tell her, in the hearing of the other scholars, of her dependent situation.

‘You ought to remember, Miss Bennet,’ she one day said, ‘that you will have your living to get by teaching; and you should be more grate-

ful than you appear to be to the kind friends who take an interest in you and your poor mother, than to give so much trouble in teaching you the commonest things. How do you think you will ever be fit for your future occupation unless you take more pains to learn?’

‘Indeed, ma’am, I do try,’ faltered Little Pansy, with tears in her eyes.

‘If you call this trying,’ replied our governess, pointing to a faulty exercise which was the cause of the rebuke, ‘I have no more to say, only that it would be better for you to think of some other way of earning a living when you are grown up, for there is little hope of your succeeding as a teacher.’

Now, perhaps there was good reason for Mrs Austin to be vexed at the apparent dulness of her scholar; but surely it would have been kinder and wiser to have spoken to her privately respecting her mother’s poverty, instead of proclaiming it so openly to the whole school.

At other times, poor Little Pansy was told

that she was scarcely fit to be in company with the other young ladies, because of the inferiority of her dress. This was scarcely just, for though her clothing was simple and plain, she was so neat, and had so much good taste, that she might very well have been held up as a model for our imitation. And so, indeed, she sometimes was, when our governess was in a different mood; and then we were told to 'look at Miss Bennet, who, though her clothing, poor thing, does not cost a quarter so much as that of any other young lady in the school (and a good reason why), always manages to look so genteel and lady-like.'

I cannot but suppose that Little Pansy felt both censures and commendations of this sort keenly; but she always received them so humbly and cheerfully that no one could see how much pain they really caused her.

I might mention other small matters in which Little Pansy was sometimes made to see and feel the difference there was between her richer

schoolfellows and herself; but I have written enough, I think, to show that, in these early school-days, she had some trials to bear, which, if they were not very heavy compared with other troubles she had known, or with the advantages she enjoyed, were certainly rather disagreeable. Indeed, I have known some young people who would have given way under them so as to have become constantly unhappy. But this was not Little Pansy's way. Her countenance generally gave all who saw her the impression that she had a contented disposition; and if, at very rare intervals, it was overcast with sorrow, she had a happy power and habit of banishing the uninvited guest by active occupation.

When I look back upon these days, I wonder how it was I continued to feel unkindly toward this dear child. One thing is certain, I did not think of the sinfulness of my conduct, for I had very imperfect ideas respecting the nature of sin in general. I knew, indeed, that some

actions were said to be offensive to the Almighty; but, as many of these were actions of which school-girls were not likely to be guilty, I was (when I thought on the subject at all) pretty well satisfied with my own character and condition. I did not really believe, though I must sometimes have heard it said, that the holy God takes notice of 'the thoughts and intents of the heart,' and that such feelings as envy, jealousy, pride, scorn, and unreasonable dislike of a fellow-creature, malice and uncharitableness, are all offensive in his sight, and have need to be both repented of and forsaken, as well as guarded against.

Now I am ready to confess that all these feelings were indulged in my heart against my unoffending schoolfellow; and the more I perceived that she gained the affections of others, the more angry and bitter did I become. I envied her popularity, and was jealous of the praise she obtained, while I scorned her for the disadvantages she laboured under. Poor Little

Pansy knew that I disliked her; she could not help knowing that, though she little could have guessed how strong my prejudices were.

Dear young readers, beware of harbouring in your hearts such feelings as I have described. If you wish to be happy, be loving and humble. And whenever you feel yourselves in danger of giving way to unreasonable prejudices against a young companion, pray for the help of God's Holy Spirit, that you may gain the victory over them. Remember what the Bible says to us: 'If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?' And what, in the Bible, is said to men and women, is said to children also.

CHAPTER III.



HAVE now to pass over two whole years in my story. There had been several changes in Mrs Austin's school. Some of the pupils had left,—and among these was Elizabeth Johnson, who had always shown much kindness and attention to Little Pansy,—and their places had been taken by fresh pupils. There was a new teacher also,—a young French lady,—who was very smart in many respects.

Little Pansy (as I shall continue to call Anna Bennet) was still at school; and in one particular she was very much altered. She was no longer slow in learning, as she had been at first. It seemed as though her mind had awakened; and, having taken a start, she steadily but very quickly had overcome her past deficiencies, and had already overtaken

many of her schoolfellows who were, as they thought, a long way before her. There was no more occasion now for Mrs Austin to find fault with Anna's dulness, and to say that she would never be fit for a teacher; on the contrary, our governess frequently praised her for diligence, and spoke of her as an example to all the other scholars.

I cannot tell how this change in Little Pansy was brought about, except that she really made very strong and constant efforts, and took pains to learn; for I do not at all imagine that learning was at any time easy to her. There was one accomplishment, however, in which, by this time, she was found to excel, and in which she took so much delight, that its acquirement was, I think, a positive pleasure. Anna was very fond of music, and our music-master declared that she had a fine ear for harmony. She certainly had a sweet, musical voice; and she had already learned to play very nicely on the piano.

But whatever alteration time had made in

Little Pansy, she was unchanged in two particulars. Her poverty was unchanged, so was her gentleness; and this affectionate and gentle disposition continued to win and also to secure the admiration of all around her. But it did not secure mine. This is a sad confession to make, but it is a true one. Indeed, I had come to dislike Anna more than ever; for she had not only gained the affections of my former friend and companion, Mary,—and, as I fancied, had taken them away from me,—but she had excited my jealous rivalry by her quick advances in learning. I had one consolation, however; I could open my heart to the new teacher, the young Frenchwoman; and she sympathized with me, for she also had taken a strange dislike to Little Pansy, while she declared that she was very fond of me.

Mademoiselle Ferrier (this was the teacher's name) was vain, artful, and covetous, and, as was afterward proved, she was dishonest also; but, for a time, our governess thought very

highly of her; and it is not extraordinary that an inexperienced school-girl as I was should have been deceived as well. Indeed, I thought her the most agreeable, open-hearted, generous young person I had ever met with; and her friendship quite consoled me for Mary Tucker's coldness and indifference. It is needful for me to say this; but it must not be supposed that I accuse all French teachers of being like Mademoiselle Ferrier. This would be very incorrect and unjust.

One day I was permitted to accompany Mademoiselle into the town; and as I wished to buy something at one of the shops, I went to my desk and took out my purse. I did not look into it then; but when I took it out of my pocket to pay for what I had bought, I found, to my great astonishment and dismay, that a half-sovereign had disappeared. It was in vain that I quite emptied out the purse on the counter, and turned it inside out,—there was no half-sovereign to be found.

‘Oh, Mademoiselle!’ I said, ‘I have lost—’ and I told her of the discovery I had made.

‘Eh, my dear,’ she said, ‘this is very strange. Are you quite certain that your purse contained so much money?’

‘Yes, indeed, I am quite sure,’ I said; for only two days before I had counted my money, and I knew that then I had the half-sovereign safe; and now it was gone.

My companion was very much concerned—at any rate, she professed to be; and she helped me to count over my money again as it lay on the counter. She also searched the shop-floor, thinking, perhaps, as she said, that I had dropped the small golden coin there. But the search was useless, and I had to leave the shop with a heavy heart. I must not omit to say, however, that Mademoiselle offered to pay out of her own purse for the few trifles I had purchased, and to make me a present of them. I declined this; but it gave me a yet higher opinion of her good-nature and generosity.

'I must tell Mrs Austin of my loss,' I said, as we returned home.

'My dear, do you think you will?' said the teacher.

'I must,' I said. 'If I were not to tell, and she were to find it out, she would be angry.'

'I think she will be angry if you tell her, my dear,' she replied; 'she will say it was your carelessness.'

'I dare say she will; but she will be more angry if I do not.'

'But the good lady will not discover that you have lost your money,' said Mademoiselle, quickly. 'I will be sure to keep the secret.'

'But I cannot think how I can have lost the half-sovereign,' I said; and then, after a little time and thought, I added, 'Somebody must have—' I stopped here, for I did not like to say what was in my mind. Mademoiselle said it for me, however.

'Yes, my dear; somebody must have stolen it. That is what I have been saying to myself.'

‘Then I am sure Mrs Austin ought to know it,’ I said.

But the French teacher said, ‘No; it would be better not to tell Mrs Austin, but to keep a sharp look-out for the thief, whoever it was. You and I know that there must be one dishonest person in the house, my dear,’ she added, ‘and it will be very good sport to find out that person by ourselves;’ and Mademoiselle laughed.

Now I confess I was too vexed by my loss to share in my companion’s mirth, but I agreed that it was not to be mentioned, and there the matter ended for that time.

An incident which happened the next day rather diverted my mind to another subject. Mrs Austin had an unexpected visitor. I well remember Little Pansy’s being called out of the schoolroom, and her returning afterward with a face quite flushed with happiness, and such glad tears in her eyes, and then soon vanishing again. I remember, too, how soon the whisper spread through the room that Little

Pansy's sailor brother, Frederick, was come to see her. I know that I pretended to care nothing for this piece of intelligence; but it was only pretence, for I was as curious as most girls are, and I wondered whether we should see him before he went away.

We did see him, for Mrs Austin kindly invited him to be her guest for two or three days; and though, of course, the young sailor never entered either our school or dining-room, he was not quite hidden from sight; and all the other girls agreed that Little Pansy had a handsome, manly brother. I thought so too, but I would not say so. I disliked Anna so much that I would not speak kindly even of her brother.

Frederick Bennet had been at sea several months, and he was shortly going again; so no wonder his sister made much of him while she could. And Mrs Austin was very considerate, and released Anna from all her school duties while Frederick remained near her, that she

might walk out with him and enjoy his society. It was rather a sorrowful parting at last, no doubt; but Little Pansy strove very hard to overcome her natural regret, and she succeeded.

A few days after this visit, and when Little Pansy had quite recovered her usual spirits, and her schoolfellows had almost ceased to talk of her brother, the school was thrown into confusion by two or three of the girls complaining that they had missed money out of their desks. They were only small amounts of silver that were lost, but it was not the less mysterious and strange. Mademoiselle Ferrier looked at me very slyly when we heard these complaints, and whispered in my ear,

‘Ah, my dear, we shall find out some one who is the little thief.’

‘You really believe that there is a thief in the school, do you, Mademoiselle?’ I asked.

‘Yes, truly,’ she said, ‘a little thief there must be. How else can the money, what you call, vanish, my dear?’ I should say that Ma-

demoiselle spoke English freely, but not quite correctly; she had sometimes a peculiar way of expressing her thoughts, and when she was not quite sure of using the right word she put 'what you call' before it.

'And can you guess who the little thief is?' I asked.

'Not yet,' she said; 'but wait a little, and be silent like a mouse, and I will find out.'

She did not very soon find out, however, or if she knew, she kept her own secret; and, after a few more days, or a week or two, there were complaints that others of the girls had lost money in a strange and unaccountable manner. They declared that their money was locked up safely in their school desks, and that though their desks were still locked, their little stores of spending-money had been diminished.

It was on the day after this fresh discovery that Mademoiselle Ferrier herself declared that she also had had money taken from her desk. She told me of this as a great secret.

‘See, my dear,’ she said; and she opened her desk as she spoke. ‘In this little drawer I keep my little money, and yesterday there were fourteen shillings. Now see!’ and she counted the silver slowly into my hand, to show me that there were but eleven. ‘So there are three shillings gone, you see.’

‘And was your desk locked, Mademoiselle?’

‘No, indeed,’ she said; and then she added that she had not locked her desk for a reason that was in her own mind, for she had a thought.

‘What is your thought, Mademoiselle?’ I asked.

‘My dear,’ she said, in a whisper, ‘can you not guess who is the little thief?’

‘No, Mademoiselle.’

‘You can tell me who is up very early in the morning, almost every day, what you call practising the music,’ she said, nodding her head.

‘Little Pansy!’

‘Yes, my dear, Little Pansy. Is not that true?’

There was no doubt of the truth. I have said that Anna Bennet was very fond of music; she was also anxious to improve in her practice, so as to be able to teach it, and Mrs Austin had very kindly permitted her to have access to the music-room before the regular duties of the day commenced. Anna had availed herself of this permission, and, during the summer months, had often risen an hour before any of her fellow-pupils to practise on the piano.

‘But Anna Bennet does not come into the schoolroom,’ I said, doubtingly.

‘How do you know that, my dear? The music-room is not so far off; and the little thing can very quickly skip along the hall, and nobody could know.’

I had never thought of this before; and if it had not been put into my mind, I never should have thought of accusing, or even suspecting, Little Pansy of dishonesty. At least I *think* I

should never have thought of this; for, much as I disliked her, I had many reasons for believing the dear child to be above doing anything wicked or mean. But as soon as Mademoiselle had hinted at this, I caught at the suspicion very eagerly, and the more I thought about it, the more did I try to persuade myself of its truth.

What could be more likely, I argued, than that Little Pansy had made her fondness for music and her desire to learn only an excuse, and that the true reason of her rising so early was that she might do what she pleased unnoticed and unwatched? Was she not poor also? And did not poverty lead people into dishonesty? To be sure, while Anna was playing the piano in the music-room, she could not be opening desks in the schoolroom; but sometimes she rested, and then—

I will not, however, repeat all the uncharitable thoughts which passed through my mind. I am ashamed now, as I have said before, when

I remember how strong my dislike to my unoffending schoolfellow was, and into what injustice it led me. And I am more ashamed and confounded, when I think that my proud little heart seemed to swell with exultation when I had persuaded myself to believe that Little Pansy was a thief, and that she would soon be exposed in the face of all the school. These were dreadful feelings; and I mention them now, not only to show how children may encourage malice and hatred to take possession of their souls, but to guard my young readers against them.

It was our custom to repeat a very simple and beautiful petition every evening as we knelt together in prayer; it is this: 'Let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer!' If I had thought of these words, and of their true meaning, when I so frequently uttered them, and had sincerely desired that which I asked for, and had kept my

heart with all diligence, praying also for the help of God's Holy Spirit through the Lord Jesus Christ, the meditations of my heart would have been very different from what they were. But my prayers at that time were only formal prayers; and when I knelt before God, 'I mocked Him with a solemn sound upon a thoughtless tongue.' But I must not let these painful reflections keep me from my story.

The next day Mademoiselle Ferrier took me aside again.

'I can tell you one other little secret,' she said.

'About Little Pansy?' I asked, eagerly.

'Eh; you shall hear, my dear. You remember that beautiful little breastpin you looked at one day in the shop,—the, what you call, Forget-me-not?'

I remembered it very well. It was the same day on which I discovered my loss. I remembered the breastpin, too,—a small trinket in the shape of a flower, with golden leaves and bright

blue blossoms. I had wished to buy it, and perhaps I should have done so but for my loss.

‘It is not in the shop-window now,’ said Mademoiselle. ‘It is not in the shop; it is sold.’

‘But that is not your secret?’ I said.

‘You shall hear once more, my dear,’ my companion went on. ‘How much money was that breastpin?’

‘Eight shillings,’ I replied.

‘Ah! Do you know where that beautiful little breastpin is now, my dear?’

‘Of course I do not, Mademoiselle,’ I said, still wondering what her secret could be.

The young Frenchwoman laughed in a way that was not pleasant to hear. It was not a hearty, joyous laugh, but mischievous and sly. ‘There is just such a little pin as that safely locked up, what you call, tight in her desk,—the Little Pansy,’ whispered she. ‘Oh, she is very cunning,’ she added.

‘What can Anna Bennet want with a breastpin? She never wears such things,’ I said.

‘Eh, my dear, how should I tell? And how should I tell why Little Pansy keeps it so close, and has never shown it to any one?’

‘Then how do you know that she has it, Mademoiselle?’ This was a natural question, and I asked it almost without thought.

I recollected afterward, though I thought nothing of it at the time, that Mademoiselle Ferrier was a little disconcerted and confused by the question; but she laughed again as before. There was one little bird, she said, which sometimes whispered in her ear. By this I understood her to mean that I was to ask no questions as to how her knowledge was obtained. And, indeed, I was not disposed to do so, for my thoughts and suspicions ran at once into the new channel which the young French-woman had opened. How did Anna Bennet obtain possession of that trinket? If she had bought it, whence did she obtain the money, peer as she was known to be? Eight shillings! Why, this was less than the sum that I had

lost; and the trinket must have been purchased since I lost it, though perhaps immediately afterward.

‘Oh,’ said I to myself, ‘Little Pansy, Little Pansy, you *are* a thief, and I will prove it too!’

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CHAPTER IV.

 HE storm which hung over poor Little Pansy burst at last. I very well remember that morning, when our governess first heard from the French teacher's lips, and then from mine, the story of our losses, and when afterward the other girls were called up, one by one, and spoke of the money they also had, at different times, missed from their desks. I have not forgotten, either, how angry Mrs Austin was that we had not revealed the secret before, and also that some of us had been so careless as to leave our money in unlocked desks, as we acknowledged to having done.

But what I more vividly recollect is the scene which took place when I accused Little Pansy of having expended money on a useless trinket, and other things besides; which, indeed, was

true, for she had very recently bought a pair of gloves and a few trifles of that sort · and I said that I thought she ought to be made to account for her possession of so much money.

I should explain here that I was put forward to do this by Mademoiselle Ferrier, who told me that it would be better that the accusation should come from me. And though I could not understand why she thought so, I was not unwilling to be the chief accuser.

‘Do you know what you are saying, Miss Foster?’ said our governess, who was very much agitated. ‘Do you know that by bringing such a charge against a schoolfellow you are inflicting a serious injury upon her, especially when that schoolfellow is a poor child like Anna Bennet, a fatherless and almost friendless child, whose future prospects depend so much upon her fair reputation?’ Mrs Austin said all this with much feeling; but I did not care.

‘Ah,’ I thought to myself, ‘Little Pansy is a favourite, and you do not like to hear anything

about her.' And then I said, as firmly as I could, that I was sure I did not wish to injure Anna Bennet; but oh! how untrue this was, for I had exulted in the thought of proving her to be dishonest.

'I cannot suppose you to be so wicked as to wish to injure any one, Miss Foster,' rejoined Mrs Austin. 'But since you have hinted at Anna's dishonesty, and as some one in the house seems to be light-fingered, I will do what you wish.' And then Little Pansy was called into the music-room with Mademoiselle and myself, and our governess repeated what I had said.

Poor Little Pansy! she was very much troubled. She trembled, and a deep flush spread over her face and neck, which afterward became deadly pale. Her eyes filled with tears too; and all these motions I considered at once to be signs of conscious guilt.

'You do not speak, Anna,' said Mrs Austin, after waiting a little while for her reply. 'Is

it true that you have such a breastpin in your possession as Miss Foster and Mademoiselle have described ?

‘Yes, ma’am,’ said Little Pansy, in a low tone.

‘You must let me see it. You had better bring your desk here,’ said Mrs Austin, sorrowfully; for Anna’s manner was, as she afterward guessed, a little strange and suspicious.

Little Pansy was going for her desk, when Mademoiselle interposed, saying that she would save the young lady that trouble, and in a minute or two the plain mahogany desk was open before us.

And there in a little drawer, as the French teacher had told me, was the very breastpin which has already been described, carefully wrapped in tissue-paper. More than this, Anna’s purse was also found in the desk, and it contained a little store of silver in sixpenny and fourpenny pieces.

Our governess looked very grave. ‘What

am I to understand by this, Anna?' she said. 'Is it possible that you have been so tempted, poor child?' she went on; and tears were in her eyes as she spoke. Then she added, in a firmer, sterner voice, 'You must explain how you came by so much money; and you must tell me the whole truth.'

'I can easily do that, ma'am,' said Little Pansy, gently. Her composure had returned, although the natural colour was still absent from her cheeks. And then she went on to explain, very simply and in few words, that during her brother's visit he had taken her to the shop and insisted on buying the forget-me-not breastpin, and giving it to her for a keepsake. Anna said that she tried to persuade him not to spend his money on what would be so useless to her, for that she should remember him without such a token of his affection; but he would not listen, and she was therefore compelled to receive the present.

'This is a very pretty history,' said Made-

moiselle, when Anna had so far explained; 'it is only a pity that the handsome young sailor is not here to, what you call, confirm—to make it strong. And who shall tell where he is at this time?'

'He is at sea, Mademoiselle,' said Little Pansy, very quietly. 'I know that he is at sea, ma'am,' she added, turning to Mrs Austin, 'because I had a letter from my mother only yesterday, to say that he had sailed.'

Mademoiselle laughed contemptuously. 'This is very unfortunate,' she said, and was going on, when Mrs Austin stopped her.

'I do not ask for your remarks, Mademoiselle,' she said. 'Anna cannot help her brother being at sea, and that ought not to be charged against her. But,' she added, 'you have not accounted for your having all this silver, Anna.'

She was about to do so, Little Pansy said, when she was interrupted; and then she explained that her brother had put it into her hand at parting. She had dissuaded him, he

said, from spending it on presents for her, but he did not mean to be cheated of his pleasure; and if Anna would not receive it in one way, she should in another. Little Pansy added that her brother was so determined to part with the money, which amounted to about twelve shillings, that she received it from him to please him.

Mrs Austin's countenance had gradually cleared and brightened while Little Pansy was giving these simple explanations. I think that the French teacher observed this, as I know I did, for she again spoke. It was a very easy lesson for a young person to learn and repeat, she said; and the young lady was safe to make her story good, since her brother was gone, though indeed he might very likely tell the same story if he were present; but what then? it might be very false for all that.

'And I wish to know,' I added, passionately, 'whether our money is to be stolen out of our desks, and—'

'You must be respectful, if you please, Miss Foster,' said our governess, very firmly. And then she added, 'No; your money is not to be stolen without efforts being made to discover the dishonest person; but you must leave it with me to make those efforts, and we must take care to speak and act justly. Now, without saying anything about Anna Bennet's explanations, there is one circumstance which I do not understand. It seems that some of the young ladies who have lost money had locked it up in their desks, and that their desks were still locked, though the shillings and sixpences had disappeared. Can you account for that, Mademoiselle?'

Mademoiselle could account for it very easily. She said, 'If any little thief—'

'We need not say *little* thief, Mademoiselle,' interposed Mrs Austin.

'Pardon, madame; it was a little slip. If any thief have false keys, what you call, pick-lock keys—'

‘Ah! I did not think of that, Mademoiselle. But I should not imagine—’ Mrs Austin stopped here, and seemed to be thinking very deeply. ‘Mademoiselle,’ she said, presently, ‘will you oblige me by saying how you became aware of Anna’s having this little breastpin in her possession?’

‘Madame must excuse,’ said the French teacher, rather haughtily; ‘I am not, what you call, accustomed to be so questioned.’

‘Do not say any more, Mademoiselle; I will excuse you, certainly,’ said the governess, mildly. And then she went on to say that the matter must rest for the present.

‘But if you please, ma’am, am I charged—’ Little Pansy it was who said this; and having reached this point, she burst into tears.

‘Be patient, Anna; there is no charge,’ replied Mrs Austin. ‘Your explanations have so far satisfied me that there is no charge against you. And I have to request,’ she continued, speaking to Mademoiselle and me, ‘that you

will behave with kindness and confidence, and sympathy also, toward Miss Bennet. There is nothing to call forth your distrust at present; when there is, I will inform you. And when the dishonest person is discovered, you may be satisfied that whoever it may be, she shall be punished.'

Mrs Austin said this very calmly and gravely; but there was something in her manner which, I believe, encouraged Little Pansy to throw herself weeping into our really kind governess's arms, sobbing, 'Thank you; oh, thank you, dear Mrs Austin, for all your kindness to me!'

'Eh! what an artful little thing,' whispered Mademoiselle Ferrier to me as we returned discontentedly to the schoolroom. It was indeed plain that our insinuations against Little Pansy had so far failed. We had not proved anything. Let me do myself the poor justice, however, of saying that I really did believe her to be guilty; and that the story of her brother having bought the breastpin for her, and given

her the money, was too unlikely to be credited. Besides, if Little Pansy had not taken the money, who had?

Two or three weeks passed away, in which no discovery was made; and I need scarcely say that they were joyless weeks to all in the school. The girls seemed to have lost confidence in each other, and each also seemed to feel that she was suspected. As to poor Little Pansy, she was very quiet and silent. It is true that our governess had declared that the charge against her had failed, and had desired that she should be treated with kindness and confidence; but Mademoiselle Ferrier took care to keep the suspicions respecting her alive and active, and secretly to spread them; and I did not attempt to conceal my indignation at the favouritism which I openly charged our governess with showing to the sorrowful child. We were too successful in our attempts to mortify and distress Little Pansy; so that, from day to day, one young friend after another dropped

away from her, until she was left almost solitary.

I am sure that Mrs Austin saw all this, and felt very much grieved; but she said nothing to any of us on the subject, nor on that of our losses, and we began to fancy that she had determined to pass it over altogether. But we were mistaken.

One evening, while we were in the school-room looking over our lessons for the next day, under the care of our French teacher, the door opened, and Mrs Austin entered. She was not alone. A little elderly woman, rather plainly dressed, and whom none of us had ever before seen, followed closely after her, and cast her bright, keen eyes sharply round the room.

‘That is the person,’ she said, and she pointed to Mademoiselle, who until then had not looked round. Of course the eyes of all the girls were then taken off their books, and directed to the teacher. And oh, what a change in her looks we all witnessed! In one moment her coun-

tenance became as white almost as the paper on which I am now writing; and then, with a little scream of terror, she sprang toward our governess, and threw herself before her on the ground, crying out for mercy, and promising to confess all if she might be spared. She was so vehement in this, that Mrs Austin was evidently alarmed; but the little old woman looked on quite unmoved, and only said, quietly—

‘I think that will do, Adelaide. And now, with Mrs Austin’s permission, we will complete our little business more in private.’

Mrs Austin understood this, of course; and, directing Mademoiselle to rise from her humiliating posture, and to walk before them, she conducted her strange visitor into the music-room.

How we sat and wondered at the strange thing that had happened, and then whispered our thoughts and conjectures to one another, may very well be imagined. Our curiosity was not gratified that evening, however, for neither Mrs Austin, nor the French teacher, nor the

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little elderly woman reappeared; and the servant who handed in our supper on a tray as usual, and afterward brought in our lights, could tell us nothing more than that the three persons I have just mentioned, after being shut up in the music-room for some time, had gone out together, Mademoiselle appearing in great distress.

We never saw the little elderly woman or Mademoiselle Ferrier again; and Mrs Austin was very silent, when we met her the next day, respecting the events of the previous evening. She merely told us that something the French teacher had said caused her to suspect that Mademoiselle herself was the guilty person, and had led her to make secretly some particular inquiries about her former history, which had led to the sudden visit of the stranger; but who that stranger was, or whence she came, we were not told.

Then, again, Mrs Austin told us that the French teacher had confessed that it was she

alone who robbed our desks, and had given up some curious keys, with which she could lock and unlock them at her pleasure. She had done this after we were in bed, when she sat sometimes in the schoolroom alone. And she had contrived that suspicion should fall upon Anna Bennet, partly because the poor child was disagreeable to her, and partly because she knew it would please one of the young ladies who professed great friendship for herself.

‘And now, young ladies,’ said Mrs Austin, ‘I have told you all that you need know about this unhappy young person, who had the art to deceive me, as I suppose she deceived others also, for a time; but you see her sin has found her out. And if we think of her at all after this, I hope it will be to receive the lesson which her conduct teaches. But there is one act of justice which remains to be done,’ continued our governess, and she looked particularly at me, I thought; ‘here is a dear child,

one of yourselves, who has been suffering cruel injustice. Ah, I see you know whom and what I mean,' she said, looking round on us all. 'Now, what amends can we make to her for the unjust suspicions which have been whispered about her?'

There was no need for Mrs Austin to say more. In another moment dear Little Pansy, trembling and almost frightened, was surrounded by her schoolfellows, who vied with each other as to who should give her the warmest, heartiest embrace, and the most fervent kisses. It was a good thing that she was not quite smothered with caresses, and it is no wonder that she could only say—

'Oh, thank you all very, very much indeed for your kindness. And, indeed, I did not mind it so much, when I felt that you were a little shy of me, because I knew I was not guilty.'

And so a complete reconciliation was made between Little Pansy and her former friends.

But amid it all was one envious, discontented heart, and that heart was mine. I did not refuse, certainly, to shake hands with Anna, though I did it coldly and ungraciously, and to tell her that it was a good thing her character was cleared; but I was angry in my secret mind that my accusations had been proved so groundless. I was angry, also, about Mademoiselle,—more angry, I am afraid, that she had been found out in her wrong-doing, and that she had deceived me so much, than grieved that she had committed so very shocking a sin—the double sin of dishonesty and of bearing false witness against an innocent child.

CHAPTER V.

O any of my young readers know what it is to be ill, very ill indeed? to lie in bed with very little strength to move? to have an aching head for days and nights together, and eyes which cannot bear the light? to feel that the mind is as weak as the body, so as to be unable to fix itself on any subject, although it wanders very painfully over a great many of which it had scarcely ever thought before? If they know this by experience, and have been graciously raised up again from their beds of sickness to remember those days and nights of weariness, they will, I hope, sympathize with me, for I was very ill. It was several weeks after the events happened which I have written about in the previous chapter, that my health and strength almost suddenly left me, and I was

obliged to keep to my own little room, and then to my bed.

The doctor who was sent for shook his head very doubtfully, as I was afterward told, when he first saw me, and had felt my pulse, examined my tongue, and inquired about all the symptoms of my illness. He said that he hoped I should recover, but that I required very careful nursing and constant attendance.

No one could be kinder than Mrs Austin was ; but school is not home, and perhaps this is never more felt than when a young person is really ill. I am sure I felt it very much indeed then.

And I felt it the more that I had no hope of being removed to my home, nor of having any kind, loving relative to nurse and comfort me. To account for this, I must inform my readers that my mother died when I was a very little child,—so young, indeed, that I cannot remember her,—and that I had neither brother nor sister, nor any very near relative excepting my dear father. And my father himself, who

was a very affectionate and indulgent parent, was travelling far away from home when my illness commenced. It was in this way that I was left so entirely to the care and kindness of Mrs Austin, who lost no time in procuring an experienced and attentive nurse, and neglected nothing that could be done, not only for my recovery, but for my comfort.

I was not aware at the time how very dangerously ill I was, and I do not remember feeling at all alarmed. I did not think of death, or of being prepared to meet my Maker. I had no more thought or feeling about religion then than when I was in full health and strength. I mention this because I am aware that many young people fancy that a bed of sickness is the best place, and a time of bodily weakness and pain the best time, for repentance, and faith, and conversion to God. This is a very great and sad mistake. It is very true that

"'Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die ;'

but you must not expect to have that solid comfort unless you are able to say from experience in the time of health,

'Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasure while we live.'

Oh, do not think, while you neglect the Saviour and his blessed gospel, because you are young, and you fancy that a more convenient season will arrive for your going to Him, that you may have everlasting life,—do not think, I entreat you, that you will be more disposed to seek his grace, and his Holy Spirit, and the pardon of your sins, and fitness for death and heaven, when you are ill and perhaps dying. Still you will be disposed to say in your heart, 'To-morrow, to-morrow; I will do it to-morrow.' This is what you are saying or thinking now; but God says to us all in his holy word, 'To-day if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts;' for 'now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.'

To return to my own little story. I lay

almost helplessly in bed for two or three weeks; and, as I said just now, my thoughts wandered over a variety of different subjects. Sometimes the past came before me quite strongly, as though it were present, and then I went over all the story of the lost money, and my accusation of Little Pansy, and Mademoiselle Ferrier's sudden disgrace; but my feelings toward Little Pansy, so far as I can recollect them, were not softened at all by my illness. Then suddenly my mind would dart off toward the future; and my vanity and pride would be gratified by fancy pictures of wealth and greatness, and all sorts of enjoyments and triumphs when I should become a woman. And in the midst of these foolish thoughts and self-flatterings, I used to drop off to sleep uneasily for a few minutes at a time; but even in my sleep the same fancies presented themselves to me in dreams.

And this, I think, is all the history I can give of almost a month of my illness, only that my kind governess used to come and see me, and

sit by my bedside every day, and many times a day, and frequently in the night too, and spoke comforting and encouraging words to me, telling me that I should soon be better, and that I should then get up my strength and good looks again. These visits were pleasant to me, for I had a regard for Mrs Austin, and they broke the monotony of my condition; for, besides the nurse, who was generally with me, and the doctor who came to see me every day, I saw no other person in all that time.

One day, however, when I was really getting better, and Mrs Austin had told me, with great gladness on her countenance, that I was out of all danger, though I was still very weak indeed, I awoke out of a gentle sleep, and turning toward the light, I saw Little Pansy sitting near me.

I was very much surprised; but I was not glad to see her well-remembered, gentle face, which, though it might be plain, as Mary Tucker had said, was certainly pleasant to look upon.

But no—not to me; I was not glad to see *her*, although I was not sorry to see a fresh face, and to hear a fresh voice.

And I soon heard Anna's; for when she saw that my eyes were open, and that I had turned them inquisitively toward her, she bent over me, and kissing my forehead, said how glad, how very glad she was that I was better.

'What are you come for?' I asked, rather ungraciously, I am afraid; but Anna did not take notice of my manner.

'The doctor has given leave for you to have a little society now,' said Anna; 'and Mrs Austin asked me to come and sit with you for a short time. And oh!' she added, warmly, 'I am so glad that you are indeed better, dear.'

'Why did Mrs Austin tell you to come, Anna? Why did not either of the others come instead?' I said, still discontentedly.

Little Pansy hesitated a little; and then she explained that, as the holidays were very near, all our schoolfellows were busy in preparing for

them. 'And you know,' said she, 'that I have no home to go to for regular holidays; so I have more time to spare.'

This was indeed true; for, though I have forgotten to mention it before, Anna Bennet had been accustomed to remain with Mrs Austin the greater part of the holidays. The reason of this was very plain,—she had no home to go to, poor child. Little Pansy did not tell me, however,—what I afterward suspected was another part of the truth,—that she was the only one who offered to go and amuse a sick school-fellow. I should add here, that though my illness was so very severe, it was not infectious or contagious; so there would have been no danger to any one in being with me a little while; but perhaps my schoolfellows thought there would have been.

'You do not mind my staying with you a little, do you, Kate?' Anna asked, rather mournfully.

'No; you may stay with me if you like,' I

said. And having thus received my permission, Little Pansy remained with me an hour or more, telling me of various little circumstances which had happened in the schoolroom during my absence, and reading to me. And this was so far agreeable, that when she said the hour had expired, I was surprised at its having passed so rapidly.

‘May I come again to-morrow?’ Little Pansy asked softly, as she kissed me and said good-bye.

‘Yes, if you like,’ I said.

She came to see me again the next day therefore, and every day after that, through two or three weeks, until at last I began to look for her coming as a pleasurable excitement. And she did not confine her visits to once a day, and for an hour at a time; because the doctor, finding me daily improving, encouraged these visits, until at length Mrs Austin permitted Anna to be with me several hours every day.

Little Pansy had always something pleasant to talk about when I chose to let her talk; and

when I preferred being silent, she sat quietly by my bedside. If I said, 'Have you nothing to read to me?' she had always a book at hand, and if I wanted anything, she was ready to run and fetch it for me. And yet, all this time, though I made use of her in this manner, I do not remember that I had any very kindly feelings toward Little Pansy. I looked upon her only as a sort of servant, who was bound to do all that I required; and I am sure I must sometimes have put her patience to the test by my unreasonable whims.

But I got better daily; and by the time the school broke up for the mid-summer holidays, I was so much stronger as to be able to walk with a little assistance, not only across my own little room, but into our governess's drawing-room. There I received the 'good-byes' of my schoolfellows; and after that, Mrs Austin, Anna Bennet, myself, and the servants, had the large house all to ourselves.

A few days after the breaking-up, a letter

came from my father; and in consequence of what he wrote, our governess resolved on taking not only me, but Anna Bennet also, to the sea-side. The doctor had recommended this change for me, and also that I should have a companion near my own age. As soon as we could, therefore, we journeyed to a pleasant little town on the sea-side, and remained there a month.

Little Pansy thus became my constant companion. Until I was strong enough to walk out, she accompanied me in my drives, or sat with me at our lodgings, which overlooked the beautiful sea. She read to me, played and sang to me, talked with me, sat by me in silence,—did anything, in short, that I chose to require of her. And this is saying a great deal, for I was selfish and exacting, and my sinful pride and fancied superiority were gratified by having these constant services rendered. If any one had said to me then that I imposed too much on Anna's kindness and good-nature, I should most likely have replied that Anna was

only a poor girl, and that it was only right and proper for her to wait upon me, because my father was rich. And, perhaps, I might have added that she was honoured in being permitted to be my companion.

One day, after I had regained sufficient strength to walk out, we went upon the smooth, hard sands, and there I sat upon a camp-stool which Little Pansy had carried for me, and she stood by my side watching the little waves as they rippled toward us, though at some distance off. I cannot tell how it was, but I felt at that time more kindly disposed toward my companion than I had ever before felt, and I was prompted to tell her, with more feeling than I had ever before shown, that I was very much obliged to her for all her kind attentions.

‘Dear Miss Foster,’ she began ; but I interrupted her.

‘You very often call me Miss Foster; why do you not call me Kate?’

‘I will, if you wish it,’ she said; ‘but I

fancied you liked best to be spoken to as Miss Foster.'

'Yes, so I do by people I don't choose to be familiar with,' I replied; 'but I should like you to call me Kate in future, always.'

She would be sure to remember it, Anna said; and then she finished what she had begun to say, that she was so glad to have been of any service to me.

'I did not, at one time, think I should ever come to like you at all,' I went on.

'I knew that you did not very well like me,' said Little Pansy, 'and it often made me sorry.'

'I should not have been sorry, though; if ever I know anybody does not like me, and without any reason, I take care to give them a reason for disliking me,' I said scornfully.

'But that is not quite the right plan, is it, Kate?' little Pansy said, quietly.

'I do not know what your plan may be, but it is mine, I assure you,' said I.

‘I was not thinking,—that is, I did not mean to say,—anything about my plan; I meant the Bible plan, Kate. You know that we are told there to love those who do not love us.’

‘That’s very well for—’ I scarcely knew what to add; for if I said Christian, or grown-up people, I remembered that Anna might have reminded me that a plan which was good for any must be good for all. So I altered my reply, and said, that ‘I could not pretend to be so good.’ Perhaps Little Pansy did not quite understand me, for she answered earnestly :

‘No one can be so good as the Lord Jesus Christ was by a very, very long way; but, Kate dear, we should try to be like Him, should we not?’

‘O yes,’ I said hastily, and not much approving the turn the conversation was taking, ‘we should *try* to be like Jesus I suppose. But there’s a great deal of difference in people :

some are better than others, and it is not hard for them to follow the plan you were talking of, I dare say.'

'I think,' said Little Pansy, 'that it is not easy, when people depend upon themselves, to do always what is right; but you know, Kate, God has promised his Holy Spirit to be given to help those who ask for it.'

There was a little break in our talk here, for this was a subject I did not care to converse about. But presently I said that I did not think I should ever alter, for it was my nature to despise any one whom I knew or believed to despise me.

'But if everybody were to do so, Kate,' rejoined my companion, 'what a hating and despising world it would be! don't you think so, dear? And do you not think it is the best way—the best way for our comfort, I mean—not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good?'

I fancied that Anna was thinking of herself

and me when she said this; and I replied, that it might be very well for those who had to make their own way in the world to go upon that principle, because it might be one way of getting friends. 'Now you know,' I added, 'I should never have been friendly with you, Anna, if you had not done so.'

'Done how, dear?' Little Pansy asked, very simply.

'Why, overcome evil with good. You mean that, did you not?'

Anna protested very earnestly that she had not been thinking of herself at all; but I could scarcely believe her at the time. It seemed natural to me for all persons to be thinking of themselves before they thought of any others. I was so strongly impressed with this idea, and felt so sure that Little Pansy had good reasons—or what I should then have called good reasons—of her own for her attentions to me, especially since my illness, that I said, 'Do you think you should have cared anything

about my friendship, Anna, if—if you had been very rich and I poor?’

Little Pansy did not reply immediately; but I think she felt rather hurt at my question, which, indeed, was rude and insulting, though I did not mean it to be so. At last she said in a low voice, as though she were speaking to herself more than to me, ‘I do not think it would have made the least difference. I hope it would not. It is best not to think about “rich” and “poor” in such things, but to try to be friends with every one.’

I was not quite satisfied with this reply; but I did not know what rejoinder to make, so I went back to what had been in my thoughts a minute before.

‘Anna,’ I said, ‘were you not very angry with me—you know when—about that breastpin and the money, I mean?’ I said this awkwardly I dare say. It was the first time I had ever ventured to speak on this subject to Little Pansy since we had been so much together.

‘Yes, Kate,’ said Anna very gently, but without a moment’s hesitation.

Now, I really was surprised at this answer. For one thing, Little Pansy had never shown any anger, though she was certainly much grieved; and, for another thing, I knew or believed, that if I had been placed in her circumstances, and had felt ever so angry, I should not have owned it afterward.

‘Were you really angry with me, though?’ I asked.

‘I am afraid I was, Kate.’

‘Why did you not tell me so then?’

‘It would not have done any good, would it?’ she asked with a smile. ‘It would not have made you think the better of me, and it would not have proved my innocence I am sure.’

‘Well, I don’t know about that; but I know one thing, Anna, you were very successful in concealing your feelings. Only think of the days and days that passed, and you never showed that you were angry at all!’

'I did not say that I was angry for days and days,' said she. 'It was only at first.'

'I do not understand you,' I went on, when I saw that Little Pansy was not disposed to talk freely about that matter. 'But it does not signify, only I should like you to know that I do feel ashamed of the way in which I acted toward you then.'

I can scarcely describe how great an effort it required to make this confession. It was so humiliating, I thought; and but for my having been softened so much toward my school-fellow by her kindness to me, I should never have thought of making it. 'It was doing evil to you, I know; and I understand what you meant just now when you spoke of overcoming evil with good,' I added.

Once more, however, Anna said that that was not her meaning, she was not thinking of the circumstance at all. 'And, dear Kate,' she added, 'I cannot say that it was evil in you, for you know you were deceived, and really

believed that I was dishonest, and not quite without reason. So please do not say any more about it.'

'Well, I will not, then,' I said; 'only I am glad you have forgiven me.'

Little Pansy smiled again. 'I did that a long time ago, I think, if there was anything to forgive,' she said; and then, after a moment's thought, she added, speaking very earnestly, and the tears came to her eyes, 'Kate, dear, that was a great trial to me: may I tell you what gave me great comfort all the time it lasted?'

'It was knowing that you were wrongly suspected and accused, I suppose, Anna, was it not?'

'It was only partly that, Kate; no, I do not think that this alone would have made me feel as I did. It was prayer, dear Kate. We are told in the Bible, you know, to cast our burdens upon the Lord, and are promised that He will sustain us. I did this, and asked that I might have the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ given

to me. And, Kate dear, my prayer was answered; my anger was taken away, and I felt peaceful and quiet in the midst of my sorrow. I did not know till then,' Little Pansy went on, 'how much happiness there is in trusting in God, and how much help He gives in times of need to those who ask Him; but I learned this in my trouble, and I hope I shall never forget it. So, you see, I have more reason to be glad that the trouble did come upon me, than to be unforgiving toward you, dear, for having had a little part in it.

'And, dear Kate,' added Little Pansy, 'I have wanted to tell you all this before, but I have not liked; so I am glad you began to speak about it—about that trouble, I mean.'

I was glad, too, that I had spoken about it, and that the subject was so easily got over. And I was so far pleased with myself for having owned to being in the wrong, that I was all the more disposed to be pleased with Anna also.

'Do you know what I have been thinking,

Anna?' I said presently. 'But of course you do not; so I will tell you. We shall not always be girls, you know.'

'No, Kate,' answered Little Pansy, with a sigh. I thought I could understand what the sigh was about. Of course Anna was thinking of the trials she would have to pass through on account of her poverty.

'Well, I shall be a woman first,' I went on, speaking quite confidentially, 'for I am a year older than you; and when I am settled, you know, and—and—'

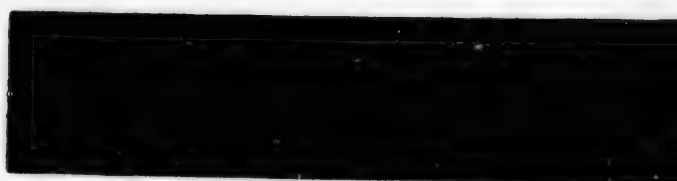
Well, it was very foolish, and it is not worth writing down word for word; but the sense (or nonsense) of what I said was, that Little Pansy was to be the governess in my grand house, and I would give her a liberal salary and be very kind to her—oh, very!

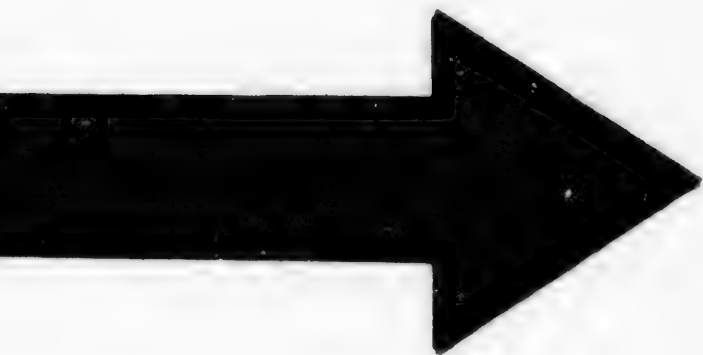
Little Pansy heard me gravely till I had finished, and then her countenance changed. She was naturally cheerful, as I have said before, and not unfrequently merry. She also

had a keen perception of what was ridiculous; and so, in spite of her attempts to 'keep her countenance,' she broke out into a hearty laugh, which I must say rather disconcerted me.

She did not laugh long, however; and as soon as the involuntary merriment had passed away, she apologized for what she called her rudeness. She was only amused, she added, by the idea of two school-girls seriously planning engagements for the time when they should be grave, sober women. At the same time she thanked me very sincerely for my generous intentions, and said, whatever might be her own lot, she earnestly hoped that mine might be as bright and happy as I had pictured to myself.

I think this ended our conversation for that time; and I shall not trouble my readers with any further account of my visit to the sea-side. I will only say, that during those few weeks I in some measure made the discovery that the gentleness, kindness, and forbearance of my





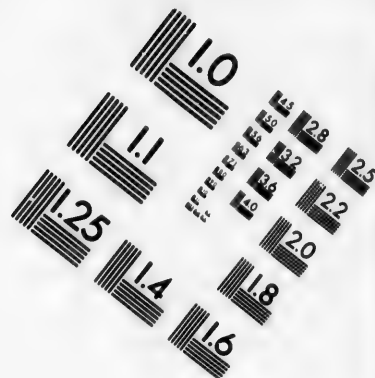
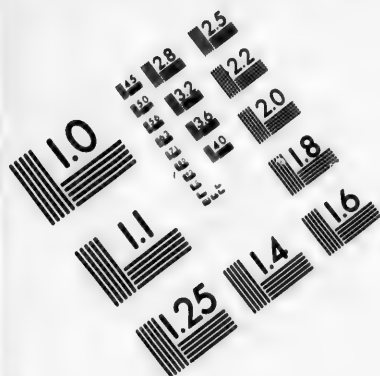
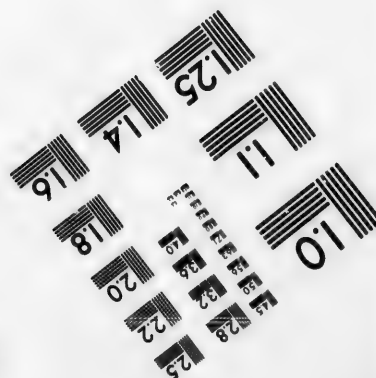
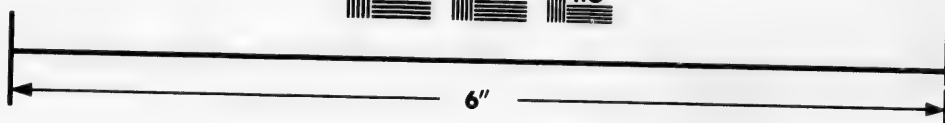
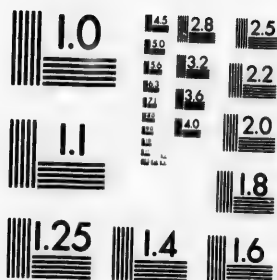


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companion, dear Little Pansy, had a higher and more enduring source than natural disposition,—that she was indeed taught of God, and that by the influences of the Holy Spirit, and constant communion with God through Jesus Christ, she had been enabled to manifest those graces of meekness, kindness, love, and unselfishness which had endeared her to her schoolfellows generally, and which had at length *almost* conquered even my prejudices.

I have said that I made the discovery at that time, but I did not think much about it until long after we had parted.

For we did part. I did not return to Mrs Austin's school. At the expiration of the month my dear father arrived, and I went home with him.

CHAPTER VI.

FOURTEEN or fifteen years passed away. All the vain hopes of my girlhood had passed away also.

Instead of being a rich lady, the mistress of a fine house and the head of a large establishment, as I had once fondly pictured to myself that I was certain to be, I was poor, solitary, and dependent on my own exertions for support.

I need not explain how this came to pass: The Bible tells us that 'riches take to themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle toward heaven,' and so it had been in my experience. I may say, however, that my father had been many years dead, and that soon after his death the knowledge and experience of poverty had been brought home to me.

I had not many friends; but there were two

or three who had known me in prosperity who were kind to me in adversity. By their assistance and recommendation I obtained several situations as a private governess. I did not remain long in the earlier of these situations, for I had much to learn before I could be fit to teach others. But in course of time I became more competent; and I trust I may say without pride, that I made more than one valuable friendship with those who employed me, and those whom I taught.

I may add also, with thankfulness to my heavenly Father, that the severe trials of this part of my life were made the means of being brought near to Him by faith in his dear Son, and by the blessed teachings of the Holy Spirit. Yes, I think I may say this. And when I now think of those times of sorrow and destitution,—as I often do,—I feel the truth of what the Apostle Paul wrote when he said, ‘Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal

weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.'

So, though sorrowful, I could rejoice; for I had learned, like dear Little Pansy, to cast my burden upon the Lord, and had felt that He sustained me.

And as I have mentioned Little Pansy, I may add that I often thought of her, and that the remembrance of her, though it was partly painful, was yet very beneficial to me. I had not forgotten the month we spent together at the little watering-place, nor the knowledge which had come to me then of her youthful piety. I often wondered what had become of her, for I had never heard of her since our last parting. This is easily to be accounted for: the friendships and acquaintanceships formed at school do not often last far into life.

But, not to take up my reader's time with

reflections of this nature, I must come to the last scene in my story. As I have already said, fourteen or fifteen years had passed away since my leaving school, and I was travelling on a stage-coach toward a new situation. My last engagement, which I had left only because my pupil was growing up into womanhood, had been a very pleasant one; and I rather anxiously looked forward to being once more among strangers, who very likely, as I thought, would show but little consideration or sympathy. Still I was enabled, as I journeyed on, to cast my care upon God, knowing that He cared for me, though my fellow-creatures might not.

I knew nothing of the family in which I was to reside as governess, except that they lived in a country-house near a large town; that the gentleman was a rich man, and his lady was said, by the friend who had recommended me to her, to be an excellent wife, and a kind mother to the two little girls I had undertaken to teach, and also a considerate mistress. But

I had not seen her; for our engagement had been made by two or three letters which had passed. I knew only that her letters were kind, her terms liberal, and that her name was Harpur.

The journey came to an end as the dusk of an autumn evening was drawing on, and the coach drew up at a handsome iron gateway for me to alight. A man-servant was waiting to receive me and take charge of my luggage (there was not much), and in a few minutes I was in the hall of a pretty mansion,—ah! just such a pleasant home as I had pictured to myself many years ago as mine. But I had no time for indulging such thoughts as these, even if it had been wise to do so,—which I am sure it would not have been,—for a housemaid was speaking to me, and offering to show me into my own room.

I was glad of this,—glad, I mean, to have the opportunity of brushing the dust off my garments, and arranging my toilet a little before

my first interview with Mrs Harpur,—and I followed the servant.

‘This is your room, ma’am,’ she said, when we had ascended one flight of stairs, and then she opened a door.

The room was not empty. A lady was there, waiting for me, it seemed.

‘It is Mrs Harpur,’ the servant whispered, in reply to my inquiring look, and I entered.

* * * * *

This was ten years ago. I am living with Mrs Harpur now. I have never left her house since then, except on visits to a few former friends. And I do not disparage them when I say that not one of them is so dear to me as Mrs Harpur. How much kindness, and affection, and confidence I have received from her, I am not able to tell! She has been to me almost more than a sister, and I love her very much indeed. You need not wonder at this, truly,

for all who know her love her. But perhaps I have greater reason than many others for loving her. To them, indeed, she is the kind and generous Mrs Harpur; but to me she is—dear Little Pansy.

THE END.

